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FBI counterspy held on espionage charges

By Ed Rogers
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An FBI counterspy whose professional dealings with a female Soviet KGB agent grew into a personal involvement was arrested yesterday on espionage charges, the agency reported.

Special Agent Richard W. Miller, 47, a 20-year veteran, was charged with conspiring to pass classified documents to the Soviet Union while he was acting as a counterspy in Los Angeles, the FBI said.

The FBI also arrested Svetlana Ogorodnikova, 34, the Soviet agent, and her husband, Nikolay Ogorodnikov, also known as Nikolay Wolfson, 51, who were said to have emigrated from the Soviet Union in 1973.

Mr. Miller met Mrs. Ogorodnikova as part of his job of interviewing Soviet emigres and told her about his "personal, professional and financial problems, to which she seemed sympathetic," the FBI said.

Mr. Miller, a seasoned investigator, soon became an investigation target himself.

"We became alarmed when we realized his relationship had gone beyond a professional one and [had] become a personal one," an FBI official said. "That is what aroused our interest."

The FBI said its investigation disclosed "evidence that [Mr.]

Miller had conspired with the Ogorodnikovs to pass classified FBI documents, dealing with positive [counter-] intelligence tasking, to the government of the Soviet Union."

While Mr. Miller was being arraigned before a federal magistrate in San Diego, Assistant U.S. Attorney Ray Edwards Jr. said classified FBI documents concerning foreign agents had been found in a search of Mr. Miller's home.

Other FBI agents also discovered through wiretaps that Mr. Miller and a Soviet agent had planned a trip to Warsaw, Poland, in early October, Mr. Edwards said.

On this basis, Mr. Edwards said, officials felt "flight is a real strong risk." After this exchange, Mr. Miller was ordered held without bond.

Just before his arrest, Mr. Miller was fired for violating general standards of conduct and specific FBI regulations, the agency said.

"This is a most serious matter, involving a special agent alleged to have committed such a crime against the United States," FBI Director William H. Webster said.

"It is an aberration on the proud record of patriotic and dedicated

service of thousands of special agents throughout our history. Special agents conducted this investigation and brought this matter to the prosecutive stage," he said.

A Justice Department spokesman said the three defendants were arrested at their homes in Los Angeles in the early morning on a complaint filed in U.S. District Court in Los Angeles.

They were charged with conspiring to provide national defense information to a foreign government, which carries a maximum penalty of life in prison.

The FBI said it had interviewed Mr. Miller and Mrs. Ogorodnikova, conducted surveillance of all three suspects, bugged the Soviet couple's apartment under warrant and, with Mr. Miller's consent, searched his home.

FBI agent P. Bryce Christensen said in an affidavit that Mr. Miller admitted having numerous meetings with the Soviet woman from late May to September after she had approached him about spying.

The FBI affidavit said she ultimately asked Mr. Miller to work for the KGB, and in August he gave her an FBI document, "Reporting Guidance: Foreign Intelligence Information."

"Discovery of this document would give the KGB a detailed picture of FBI and U.S. intelligence activities, techniques and requirements," the affidavit says.

Mr. Miller admitted to the FBI's chief polygrapher last Monday that he had demanded \$50,000 in gold for delivering documents to Mrs. Ogorodnikova and had asked in August for \$7,000 in cash, the affidavit says.

Mr. Miller asked for an additional \$1,000 in expenses if he went to Mexico to deliver documents, it says.

The FBI said the search of Mr. Miller's home in Lynwood, Calif., turned up many original FBI documents stamped "secret."

Mrs. Ogorodnikova acknowledged meeting Soviet officials a number of times and told of tasks she performed for them, such as locating a Soviet citizen in California who had sought political asylum in the United States, the FBI said, establishing "her connection with the Soviet government and its intelligence network."

Yesterday's arrests came on the heels of an FBI announcement it had arrested 67-year-old Alice Michelson, an East German teacher, as she was about to board a plane at the John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York. Mrs. Michelson, too, was charged with espionage.

Mr. Miller is the first FBI agent to be arrested for espionage. Records show that seven FBI agents have been arrested in the past on other charges, a spokesman said.